



MUMBAI

American Center Bulletin

FEBRUARY

2009

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BY LYNNE GADKOWSKI

Martin Luther King, Jr. – A Celebration of His Life

The birthday of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has been observed as a national holiday for 20 years. It resulted from a 15-year campaign that included six million Americans of all races signing petitions asking the U.S. Congress to pass a law commemorating King. The holiday falls on the third Monday in January each year.

The first bill calling for the holiday was introduced in the House of Representatives in 1968, after King was assassinated. The bill passed in both houses of Congress on October 19, 1983, with enough votes to overcome any possible veto by President Ronald Reagan, who had not favored the holiday. President Reagan signed the bill into law on November 2, 1983, and the holiday was observed for the first time on January 20, 1986, with the closing of all federal offices. Since 2000, all 50 states have recognized the holiday, which means most schools, banks and many large businesses close on that day.

Schools and other organizations distribute educational material to remind Americans of King's ideals of nonviolence and equal opportunity for all. Church services, choir performances, essay contests, marches and rebroadcasts of King's speeches are some of the events that occur around the holiday.

King was born on January 15, 1929. He first came to prominence in the mid-1950s when, as a Baptist preacher in Montgomery, Alabama, he led a 382-day boycott of the public transportation system. He wanted to end the law that required African Americans to ride in the backs of buses, and to stand even if seats were available in the front "white" section. Eventually, the Supreme Court declared Alabama's state segregation laws unconstitutional. King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which led other campaigns across the southern states to bring equal rights in voting, schooling, housing and use of public facilities. King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his insistence that the civil rights campaigners use nonviolent means, not striking back even when they were beaten and jailed.

— from SPAN magazine

This month, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the visit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to India.

His son, Martin Luther King III, will be retracing his father's footsteps and echoing the message of his visit 50 years ago ... not as a tourist, but as a pilgrim. Within minutes of his arrival in India on February 10, 1959, Martin Luther King, Jr., paid tribute to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and his philosophy of nonviolence.

King was known, at that time, as the leader who led a movement that ended racial segregation on the public buses of Montgomery, Alabama through coordinated, mass, peaceful disobedience of unjust laws. His month-long stay in India was sponsored by the Quaker Society, a Christian group for which the character of peacefulness is a principal tenet. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had invited King to come to India.

At his first press conference, held at a New Delhi hotel, King said: "To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim. This is because India means to me Mahatma Gandhi, a truly great man of the ages. India also means to me Pandit Nehru and his wise statesmanship and intellectuality that are recognized the world over. Perhaps, above all, India is the land where the techniques of nonviolent social change were developed that my people have used in Montgomery, Alabama, and elsewhere in the American South. We have found them to be effective and sustaining. They work!"

Asked if nonviolence had won over the hearts of white Americans, King said: "Nonviolence is not a miracle that works overnight." But, he added, it went off "very well" in Montgomery. He said an encouraging aspect of the experiment in nonviolence in Montgomery was that the bus boycott was completely devoid of bitterness against white people. Another heartening feature was the moral support that came from many white Americans. King said that the "real victory" lay not in bus integration but in the "new sense of dignity and destiny" which Black Americans had acquired, as well as spreading the idea of racial equality and justice. He mentioned that 35 Southern U.S. cities had voluntarily integrated buses.

King was optimistic about the future, saying prior to his arrival in India, "Racial integration is coming about in hundreds of ways." He cited the end of racial segregation in transportation, education and public facilities, attributing much of this social change to a Federal Court ruling and increased sensitivity in

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HOLIDAYS

February 16: Presidents' Day

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Friends,

For many Americans, February represents the coldest, harshest month of winter, which is what makes February in Mumbai so interesting for me. Growing up in suburban Baltimore, it would have been unimaginable for me to leave my house on a February morning without a hat, gloves, and a heavy coat. I'm still surprised by the pleasantness of Mumbai winters, though part of me misses coming in from the frigid outdoors and enjoying a winter day's snack of a grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup.

February means many other things besides soup and a sandwich. It's the month we celebrate the birth of two of our greatest presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. It's also Black History Month, when America recognizes the achievements of its African-American citizens.

My personal favorite February holiday is Groundhog Day, celebrated February 2. It's the day that an animal with unique meteorological capabilities, a Pennsylvania groundhog named Phil, is coaxed out of his den. If he sees his shadow, the theory goes, winter will continue into March. But, if he doesn't see it, or if the weather's too cloudy, winter will come to an early end.

As a kid, I hoped Phil wouldn't see his shadow, as I was ready for the cold to end so I could play outdoors. Though I'm not sure his predictions extend as far as India, this year I'm hoping for something different, as a few more weeks of a Mumbai winter would suit me just fine.

Kanishka Gangopadhyay
Vice Consul

(Continued from page 1)

the South to world opinion. Explaining why Black Americans had not adopted more radical means, King said, "The basic reason is that the American Negro has faith that he can get justice within the framework of the American democratic setup."

King spent a month meeting with followers of Gandhi and studying the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence under the auspices of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the American Friends Service Committee (the Quakers). He was accompanied by his wife, Coretta Scott King, who gathered information on the role of women in the Indian independence movement.



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Lynne Gadkowski works at the American Center, Mumbai

About Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a vital figure of the modern era. His lectures and dialogues stirred concern and sparked the conscience of a generation. The movements and marches he led brought significant changes in the fabric of American life through his courage and selfless devotion, which gave direction to 13 years of civil rights activities. His charismatic leadership inspired men and women, young and old, in America and around the world. King's concept of "somebodiness," which symbolized the celebration of human worth and the conquest of subjugation, gave black and poor people hope and a sense of dignity. His philosophy of nonviolent direct action, and his strategies for rational and nondestructive social change, galvanized the conscience of the nation and reordered its priorities. His wisdom, his words, his actions, his commitment, and his dream for a new way of life are intertwined with the American experience.

At the age of five, King began school at the Yonge Street Elementary School in Atlanta. When his age was discovered, he was not permitted to continue in school and did not resume his education until he was six. He also attended the Atlanta University Laboratory School and Booker T. Washington High School. Because of his high scores on the college entrance examinations in his junior year of high school, he advanced to Morehouse College without formal graduation from Booker T. Washington. Having skipped both the ninth and twelfth grades, King entered Morehouse at the age of 15. In 1948, he graduated from Morehouse College with a B.A. in Sociology. That fall, he enrolled in Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. He won the Peral Plafkner Award as the most outstanding student, and received the J. Lewis Crozer Fellowship for graduate study at a university of his choice. He was awarded a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozer in 1951.

Martin Luther King, Jr. entered the Christian ministry and was ordained in February 1948 at the age of 19 at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia. He was a pivotal figure in the Civil Rights Movement, and was elected President of the Montgomery Improvement Association, the organization that was responsible for the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott from 1955 to 1956 (381 days).

King was shot while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968. He was in Memphis to help lead sanitation workers in a protest against low wages and intolerable working conditions. James Earl Ray was arrested in London, England on June 8, 1968, and returned to Memphis, Tennessee on July 19, 1969, to stand trial for King's assassination. On March 9, 1969, before coming to trial, he entered a guilty plea and was sentenced to 99 years in the Tennessee State Penitentiary. On December 8, 1999, a jury of 12 citizens of Memphis, Shelby County, concluded that Loyd Jowers and governmental agencies including the City of Memphis, the State of Tennessee, and the federal government were party to the conspiracy to assassinate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King's funeral services were held on April 9, 1968, at Ebenezer Baptist Church and on the campus of Morehouse College, with the President proclaiming a day of mourning and flags being flown at half-staff. The area where King is entombed is located on Freedom Plaza in Atlanta, and is surrounded by the Freedom Hall Complex of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site. The 23-acre site was listed as a National Historic Landmark on May 5, 1977 and was made a National Historic Site on October 10, 1980 by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Source: www.mlkday.gov

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

A Select List of Documentary Films on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Citizen King (2004, 115 mins)
(DVD 323 KIN)

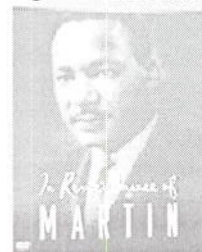
In exploring the last few years of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life, this beautifully crafted production traces King's efforts

to recast himself by embracing causes beyond the civil rights movement, by becoming a champion of the poor and an outspoken opponent of the war in Vietnam. The film taps into a rich archive of photographs, film footage, diaries, letters, and eyewitness accounts of fellow activists, friends, journalists, political leaders and law enforcement officials, to bring fresh insights to King's impossible journey, his charismatic leadership and his truly remarkable impact.

In Remembrance of Martin
(1986, 60 mins) (DVD 323 KIN)

To memorialize the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King is joined by distinguished public figures including Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Julian Bond, former President Jimmy Carter, Bill Cosby, Dick Gregory, Jesse Jackson, Senator Edward Kennedy, John Lewis, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Andrew Young. Together they remember highlights in King's career through dramatic archival footage tracing his leadership in the civil rights movement.

PBS HOME VIDEO



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Historical Perspective
(2002, 60 mins) (DVD 323 KIN)

This film examines Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s extraordinary life using rare and largely unseen film footage and photographs. Writer/director Tom Friedman explores how King's ideas, beliefs and methods evolved in the face of the rapidly changing climate of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Authorized Biography

Dr. MARTIN
LUTHER
KING

A Historical Perspective

ALSO AVAILABLE

Biography: Martin Luther King, Jr. The Man and the Dream
(1997, 50 mins) (DVD 323 KIN)

Black History: The War Years and the Civil Rights Movement
(2007, 11 hours and 52 mins) (DVD 973.0496 BLA)

King (1978, 4 hours and 32 mins) (DVD 791.4572 KIN)

Voices of Civil Rights
(2006, 4 hours and 3 mins) (DVD 323 VOI)

NOTE: The physical location of the film is indicated by the call number in parentheses in the description above. The DVDs are only available for borrowing by institutional members. Individuals may approach the Circulation Desk to view the DVDs in the library.

ERRATUM

In the January 2009, issue of the American Center bulletin, the title under *Notes from the American Library* had been inadvertently listed as "A Select List of Books on Space Research." This was incorrect, and the list of books given, were recent additions to our library.

MUMBAI MONDAYS

A discussion on
**We're Not Gonna Take It – Rhythm, Rhyme,
and Rebellion in American History**
led by Rachel Crawford

Monday, February 23
American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

Rachel Crawford is a Foreign Service Officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai. She has previously served in Tel Aviv and Seoul. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Rachel was a public school teacher in the South Bronx in New York City. She has a B.A. in Theology and an M.S. in Elementary Education. Rachel enjoys Tae Kwon Do, dancing, and bad comedies.

From fueling the fires of the American Revolution to giving a voice to urban poverty, protest music has played a key role in civil disobedience and political change in the United States. Artists such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Public Enemy, and The Dead Kennedys have altered the social landscape of the U.S. by making popular music with a message. This presentation will trace the evolution of American protest music and its impact on culture, politics, and society.

NATIONAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is traditionally the month containing Abraham Lincoln's birthday (February 12) and Frederick Douglass' presumed birthday (February 14). Observance of a special period to recognize achievements and contributions by African Americans dates from February 1926, when it was launched by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Black History, Afro-American History, African-American History, the observance period was initially one week, but since 1976, it has been the entire month of February.

A WORD FROM THE AMERICAN CORNER

The American Center collaborates on "Active Learning" Workshop for English-Language Classrooms

The first regional English Language Teachers' Association of India conference, in collaboration with the Regional English Language Office at the American Center in New Delhi, is being hosted by the Ahmedabad Management Association, February 6 and 7, 2009.

This workshop focuses on the theme: *Active Learning: Making Learning More Enjoyable and Productive*.

With a congregation of professional speakers and interactive workshops, the conference promises to benefit teachers of all levels. The workshop will cover motivational teaching methods, classroom dynamics, alternative assessment, teaching mixed ability groups and multiple intelligences, among other topics.

For registration and other details, please contact:
Ahmedabad Management Association
Altira Campus, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai Marg, Ahmedabad 380 015
Tel: (079) 2630-8601

Registrations can also be done online at:
<http://www.amaindia.org/training-programmes/gujarat-eltai.htm>

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Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.